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GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

Hamilton Region
Conservation
Authority

R E V I E W

Fall/Winter 1999 - 2000

HRCA
BRIEFS

Hunting for red October

The best spots to view brilliant autumn foliage are easy to find at your local conservation areas.

Spencer Gorge Wilderness Area and neighbouring Webster's Falls Park in Dundas are perhaps the best known locations. Trails through the area guide visitors to observation areas at Tew's Falls and Webster's Fall. Those with a good pair of shoes may head to the gorge floor or take the link to Dundas Peak, considered one of the best lookout points in the region. The peak offers stunning panoramic views of Dundas, Hamilton and the tree-lined gorge.

Spencer Gorge Wilderness Area can be reached by taking Highway 5 west to Brock Road south. At Harvest Road, turn east and continue past Short Road to signed parking areas. Be aware the area is extremely popular this time of year and parking regulations are enforced.

Draft master plan
See story on page 3

The Dundas Valley Conservation Area also offers several leaf peeping opportunities.

For a panoramic view of this 1,200-hectare Carolinian natural area and the Niagara Escarpment, make your way to Groundhog Hill. It is located near the beginning of the Monarch Trail, just off the Main Loop Trail.

The John White Trail provides another scenic lookout. To get there, walk to the top of the large



NATURE UP CLOSE: Tew's Falls is one of several excellent locations to view fall colours.

hill at the entrance to the park and enjoy the view from two benches.

The east branch of the McCormack Trail rounds out the top three Dundas Valley lookouts. It is located along the northern section of the Governors Road

Conservation Area. For trail maps and other information, visit the Dundas Valley Trail Centre.

Christie and Valens Conservation areas also offer splendid natural areas, trails and plenty of parking.

At Christie, a 10-kilometre trail sys-

tem winds through peaceful meadows, forests and along the beautiful lake.

Valens offers 10 kilometres of trails and two observation towers that provide views to spectacular colors and migrating water fowl.

Stewardship project expands across
Hamilton-Wentworth, Halton

Partnerships with landowners are helping improve the quality of creeks and streams.

The success of a five-year project to rehabilitate the Hamilton Harbour Watershed has led to an expansion of the program across Hamilton-Wentworth and Halton.

"We're thrilled that our scope is being expanded," says Jo-Anne Rzakki, coordinator of the Hamilton-Halton Watershed Stewardship Project. "Now we can look at improving the quality of more creek and stream systems draining into bay areas and Lake Ontario. That's good news for everyone."

Prior to its expansion, the program was known as the Hamilton Harbour Watershed Stewardship Project and focused largely on the land and water surrounding Spencer and Grindstone Creeks. Both creeks originate above the Niagara Escarpment and drain directly into Hamilton Harbour.

The HHWSP has been given its new mandate by the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority and Conservation Halton, partners in the project since its inception in 1994. The Bay Area Restoration Council is also a partner in the program.

With support for the project re-affirmed,

Rzakki and assistant Sheila O'Neal have set about the daunting task of contacting thousands of private landowners. Their aim: encouraging landowners to consider how their land use impacts the health of local streams, creeks and ultimately Lake Ontario. This work may also involve partnering with landowners on rehabilitation projects for which financial assistance is available.

Enthusiasm for the project by the partnering conservation authorities is high given its previous success in the Hamilton Harbour Watershed. Consider that in just its first five years, the HHWSP secured 300 verbal agreements with landowners to practice wise land use management. These commitments cover 4,000 hectares of significant wetlands, forests, streams and meadows. An additional 150 landowners took further steps by engaging in various rehabilitation projects on their properties. These ranged from wetland and habitat restoration to erosion control and fencing cattle from creeks.

The significance of these agreements lay in the fact that private landowners — who collectively hold the majority of natural lands — are

see page 5: Stewardship

Wellness Walks

The Dundas Valley Conservation Area is hosting a new series of Wellness Walks and outdoor Active-Living Clinics beginning this fall.

Wellness Walks explore a different Dundas Valley trail each month. Warm up and cool-down stretches are done as part of the activity. The two-hour sessions, led by HRCA staff and volunteers, include interpretive highlights about the area's natural features and historical buildings.

Active Living Clinics include an even "Owl Prowl", orienteering and snowshoeing. For listings and information, please see the back page of this newspaper.

Photo contest deadline

"Snap" to it and get your entries in to the HRCA's annual Conservation Images Photography Contest.

Deadline for entries is Nov. 1. Contest categories include: conservation area landscapes; "Nature Up Close" (birds, flowers, butterflies, etc.); and activities (people).

A special category, new in 1999, is the "Junior Photographer". Elementary school children, ages six to 12, can submit photographs in any of the above categories.

Prizes include cash awards and HRCA annual vehicle passes. For contest rules, call (905) 525-2181 ext. 146.

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WENTWORTH
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HRCA Contact Us

By Mail: Hamilton Region Conservation Authority
P.O. Box 7099, 838 Mineral Springs Road
Ancaster, ON L9G 3L3

By Phone: 905-525-2181 or 905-648-4427
(Business hours: 9 a.m. — 5 p.m.)

By Fax: 905-648-4622

Internet: www.hamrca.on.ca

E-mail: nature@hamrca.on.ca

Planning & Engineering:

Phone: 905-525-2181 or 648-4427 ext. 130

Hamilton Halton Watershed Stewardship Program

Phone: 905-525-2181 or 648-4427 ext. 164

Events and Tourism Toll-free Line

Phone: 1-888-319-HRCA

The Conservation Foundation of the Hamilton Region

Phone: 905-525-2181 ext. 168 or 905-648-4427 ext. 168

Conservation Areas

Christie (Flamborough)	905-628-3060
Dundas Valley (Ancaster)	905-627-1233
Fifty Point (Stoney Creek)	905-525-2187
Valens (Flamborough)	905-525-2183 or 519-621-6029

For information on the following passive-use

Conservation Areas, call 905-525-2181 or 905-648-4427:

Beverly Swamp (Flamborough)
Spencer Gorge Wilderness Area (Flamborough)
Crooks Hollow (Flamborough)
Tiffany Falls (Ancaster)
Iroquoia Heights (Ancaster)
Borer's Falls (Dundas)
Felker's Falls (Stoney Creek)
Devil's Punch Bowl (Stoney Creek)
Fletcher Creek (Puslinch)
Mount Albion (Hamilton)

Attractions owned by the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth and managed by the HRCA:

Westfield Heritage Village (Rockton) 519-621-8851
Wild Waterworks/Confederation Park (Hamilton) 905-547-6141

The Conservation Lands of Ontario

Phone: 519-621-2763 ext 272, or 1-888-376-2212

Fax: 519-621-4844

E-mail: conservationlands@grandriver.on.ca

Internet: www.conservationlands.com

Greater Hamilton Conservation Review is published two times a year by the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority. Feedback and suggestions are welcome.

Letters and comments to:

Joan E. Bell, Manager of Marketing and Community Relations
HRCA, P.O. Box 7099, 838 Mineral Springs Road
Ancaster, ON L9G 3L3

Editorial, Design and Layout by: Tom Wallis & Tricia Borbely
Hamilton Region Conservation Authority

1999 Members

of the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority

The Township of Puslinch and municipalities within Hamilton-Wentworth appoint representatives to the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority Board to oversee the budget and activities of the Conservation Authority. These appointed members, many of whom are elected municipal representatives, speak on behalf of residents at the HRCA.

Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth

Murray Ferguson (Ancaster)
Brad Kuhn (Ancaster)
Russ Powers (Dundas)
Arlene VanderBeek (Dundas)
Dave Braden (Flamborough)
Mark Shurvin (Flamborough)
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Mary Kiss (Hamilton)
Danielle Marchese (Hamilton)
Mark Milligan (Hamilton)
Nadine Morrison (Hamilton)
Duke O'Sullivan (Hamilton)
Frank Cefaloni (Stoney Creek)
Rino Menegazzo (Stoney Creek)

Township of Puslinch

Barb McKay

Honourary Member

Thos. A. Beckett



HAMILTON
REGION
CONSERVATION
AUTHORITY



Chairman's Message:

Summer of Success

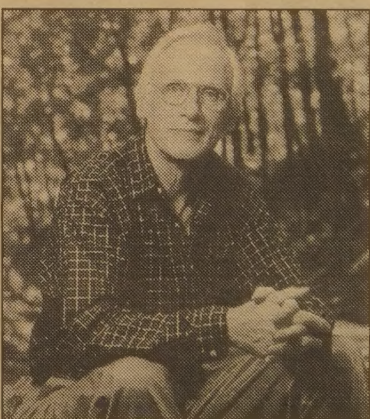
As chairman of the HRCA, I am delighted to welcome you to the Fall/Winter edition of the *Greater Hamilton Conservation Review*.

In this issue, we

explore several exciting HRCA programs currently taking place and planned for in the months ahead. But before we begin, I would like to highlight some of the many achievements involving our conservation areas and regional attractions over the past summer.

Across Hamilton-Wentworth and in Puslinch, the HRCA owns and operates more than 20 conservation areas. This stunning network of preserved and carefully managed open space offered up some of the summer's best opportunities for outdoor recreation and nature appreciation. From picnics and camping to fishing, hiking, swimming and special events, our facilities successfully met soaring public demand. As examples, I look to the extremely popular antique, craft and art shows at Christie Conservation Area. Collectively, these events attracted nearly 30,000 visitors from our region and beyond. Other popular facilities included our three campgrounds located at Valens, Fifty Point and Confederation Park. The beautiful lakefront and natural settings of these facilities drew a record number of campers for a second consecutive year. And perhaps not surprisingly, the Dundas Valley continued attracting thousands — a trend sure to continue into autumn as beautiful fall colours blanket this magnificent 1,200 hectare natural area and its 40-kilometre trail system.

In addition to our conservation areas, the HRCA is recording success in its management of Westfield — the village where time stands still. This 130-hectare heritage facility and its beautifully restored buildings stand as a premier cultural attraction in Hamilton-Wentworth. To be sure, Westfield's high-quality historical programming has become its trademark, its popularity buoyed the Civil War re-enactment in August, Anne of Green Gables Day in September, and upcoming fall harvest and Christmas events. Word-of-mouth seems to be spreading too as admissions to the end of August 1999 showed a 26 per cent increase over the previous year.



General Manager's Message:

Conservation of Natural Places

In an ideal society, the protection of environmentally important land would top the list of considerations when planning for growth. In reality, short-term "economic benefit" arguments tend to exert more influence. While Hamilton-Wentworth is no stranger to this debate, there is growing acceptance that natural areas protection is the winning strategy — and perhaps the only real way of achieving long-term economic, social and environmental prosperity. Here are some arguments behind this thinking:

• Protecting natural areas greatly enhances the aesthetics of Hamilton-Wentworth. This goes a long way in building a new identity — one different from the industrial stereotypes associated with our region.

• The physical and mental well-being of our population depends on the availability of open spaces and recreational opportunities. Passive interests, such as hiking and bird watching, are the fastest growing recreational activities. Accessible, publicly-owned natural areas are essential to meet these demands.

• Green open spaces can be considered the region's "lungs" which offset the effects of air pollution.

• The protection of natural areas can help resolve water-related environmental problems. For example, the protection of wetlands removes the need for costly and environmentally questionable flood-control structures.

• Mammals, birds, insects and seeds require natural areas to survive and open space corridors for unencumbered movement.

Wild Waterworks and Confederation Park, managed by the HRCA on behalf of the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth, also had an excellent summer. A big factor in their success has been the excellent marketing and operation of group facilities which were booked every summer weekend — that's a first for Wild Waterworks. Staff deserve our thanks for their concerted efforts to ensure families and groups received top-notch, affordable fun.

Looking to build on this success, we are proud to announce the opening of a new tube slide attraction for the 2000 season. This addition is part of our on-going commitment to keep Confederation Park an exciting and competitive attraction.

There have also been important developments in two of our long-term projects. Firstly, I am pleased to announce that the Chippawa Trail extending from east Hamilton to Caledonia will soon be linked to the Dunnville-to-Fort Erie rail trail. This represents an important step forward in our goal of building healthier communities. I am also excited by our plans to consolidate the Spencer Gorge Wilderness Area with Webster's Falls Park. These adjacent areas — widely considered among the most beautiful in Hamilton-Wentworth — will benefit significantly from a uniform, efficient approach. A Master Plan currently in development will also improve access which has long been an issue for both residents and visitors. Community involvement in this project is extremely important. Notably, the Optimist Club of Greenville is spearheading a \$200,000 campaign to restore Webster's landmark cobblestone bridge. I applaud their efforts, ask for your financial support and look forward to new partnerships with citizens and groups in the future.

In the meantime, I invite you to experience our conservation lands this fall and winter. With a host of activities and excellent facilities, I am sure you won't be disappointed.

Sincerely,

Russ Powers

Chairman, Hamilton Region Conservation Authority

• People learn from first-hand experience. Without accessible natural areas, environmental education and the development of healthy conservation attitudes would be severely impeded.

• A successful outdoor tourism industry in Hamilton-Wentworth will be attainable only with an overriding commitment to protect our natural areas and green open spaces.

The Hamilton Region Conservation Authority — a part of this community for over 30 years — is proud of its role in the protection of natural areas, especially its successes in acquiring land for public use.

We now own or manage over 3,600 hectares (10,000 acres) of natural areas and recreation lands which makes us the largest landowner in Hamilton-Wentworth.

Remarkably, the HRCA's land acquisition program operates at little cost to local taxpayers. On average, only 25 percent of the purchase price comes from municipal taxes. The rest is obtained through special provincial funding programs and aggressive fund-raising spearheaded by the Conservation Foundation of the Hamilton Region. Furthermore, our cost-effective and entrepreneurial management approach has been the driving force in operating our natural areas and parklands on a break-even or profitable basis.

If you'd like more information on our natural areas protection and acquisition programs, I would encourage you to contact me. Only by working together can we tackle the environmental, economic and social challenges which lay ahead in the new century.

Ben Vanderbrug, HRCA General Manager.

Master plans: Drafts and reviews to improve, beautify areas

The HRCA is currently drafting two master plans and reviewing others as part of ongoing efforts to better serve the public.

Valens

The Valens master plan is among those being reviewed. As part of that process, an inventory of facilities and environmentally significant areas is being conducted. This is an important first step in identifying areas needing improvement and updating.

The next phase will include an open house to seek public input on any proposed improvements. HRCA staff expect to hold this meeting by mid-December. A finalized plan could be presented to the HRCA Full Authority Board for approval early in 2000 with implementation possibly beginning in the spring.

Fifty Point

Residential development on nearby land and a proposed North Service Road entrance have led to a revisiting of Fifty Point's master plan.

The review will also assess need for a second marina basin - an option incorporated into the master plan when it was drafted in the early 1980s. Additionally, the naturalization of field and creek areas, and demand for additional campsites are being studied.

An inventory of facilities and environmental features is currently underway. The review's findings will be presented at an open house meeting in the new year before going to the Full Authority Board for approval.

Mount Albion

HRCA staff are currently drafting a master plan for the Mount Albion Conservation Area.

This 41-hectare passive natural area, part of the Red Hill Creek watershed, sits atop the Niagara Escarpment near the crest of Albion Falls.

The draft master plan includes provisions for habitat restoration, naturalization, storm water management and historical



Confederation Park West

This section of the draft master plan depicts beautification and greenspace proposals for the park's west end.

interpretation areas. It will also address the area's main feature: the Chippawa Trail, a 15-kilometre abandoned rail corridor extending to Caledonia. This pathway will become part of the Trans Canada Trail. The trail will link with an existing route down the escarpment to lower Hamilton.

A steering committee consisting of neighbours, users, and public officials will comment on the plan, likely beginning in October. Implementation could begin by spring, 2000.

Confederation Park

Meanwhile, an implementation committee will be formed in October to address the Confederation Park West master plan.

The committee will meet about four times within the next year

to provide comment and direction on the beautification plan.

Proposed components of the plan include:

- Adding a significant amount of greenspace.
 - Making separate bike and pedestrian paths.
 - Removing the go-kart track and replacing Lakeland pool with a leisure pool and a centre for the community.
 - Increasing pedestrian safety by realigning a portion of Van Wagner's Beach Road.
 - Installing decorative lighting.
- Implementation, pending plan approval, will begin as funding permits.

Webster's Falls/Spencer Gorge

Two of the area's most beautiful settings will be consolidated on January 1, 2000, when the Town of Dundas transfers ownership of Webster's Falls Park to the HRCA.

The transfer will bring the park and neighboring Spencer Gorge Wilderness Area under a single management approach conducted by the HRCA.

Among the benefits of consolidation are increased operation efficiency and improved access. The latter will be addressed in a master plan currently being drafted by HRCA staff.

Improving access has long been an issue for residents and visitors given the area's popularity as a hiking, picnicking and nature appreciation destination.

An open house will be scheduled later this fall to seek public input on the draft plan.

Your input

The public is invited to comment on drafts and reviews of master plans. For more information, call (905) 525-2181 or e-mail us at: nature@hamrca.on.ca

Low water levels impact Spencer Creek in summer '99

For the second year in a row, drought conditions have impacted Hamilton-Wentworth's largest creek and watershed.

Only two periods of significant precipitation occurred this past summer and their impact on Spencer Creek faded like blips on a radar screen.

Data streaming in from monitoring stations along the 40-kilometre creek illustrate that flow was well below average from July to September. At its worst point in late August, one station recorded no flow at all.

Spencer Creek's headwaters are near Highway 6 and Highway 401. Controlled by dams at Valens and Christie conservation areas, it winds through Flamborough and Dundas, and on to Cootes Paradise. It sustains aquatic ecosystems throughout the watershed and is used for irrigation and recreation.

Water woes were most striking at the Beverly Swamp, an area the creek runs through just south of Valens.

"Beverly had horrifically low flows," said Tony Horvat, HRCA senior engineer. "Water levels downstream of the swamp normally appear low because the swamp only releases water gradually. But if you look back through our records - to the late 1960s - it has never been that low."

Low flow also meant that reservoirs at Valens and Christie were 45 to 50 centimetres below their normal summer levels. Recreation such as fishing, canoeing and swimming at the reservoirs was not seriously impacted.

However, the situation was "serious" elsewhere along the Spencer. Horvat used that word during a press conference at Hamilton city hall on July 9 when describing impact on aquatic habitats. At that time, low flows had caused creek temperatures to rise. This placed extreme stress on fish, particularly brook trout, which require

temperatures below 20 degrees Celsius to survive.

Farmers and nurseries licenced to draw water from Spencer Creek were issued a reminder in June that the Ministry of Environment's 1998 water restrictions were still in effect. The restriction was announced in September that year after an extended dry period in July and August led to serious flow reductions.

Horvat says a heavy winter snowfall and a long spring melt is needed to ease the situation and deal effectively with similar conditions next summer.

While low water flow in Spencer Creek does not affect municipal water supplies, it has potential to impact plant and aquatic life, groundwater levels and irrigation supplies.

An integrated approach

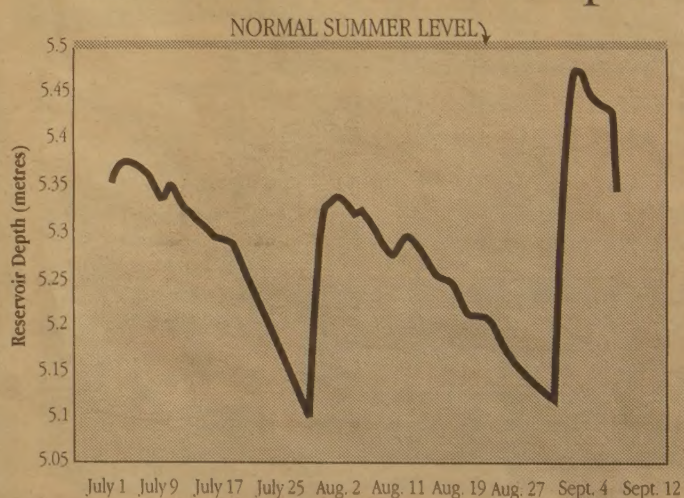
The dams at Valens and Christie operate as part of the HRCA's water flow management program. In addition to flood control, the dams augment flow during periods of low rainfall.

Wetlands and flood plains owned by the conservation authority also play a critical role in this work.

As natural water control mechanisms, wetlands provide additional opportunities for the HRCA to monitor and maintain the health of local watercourses.

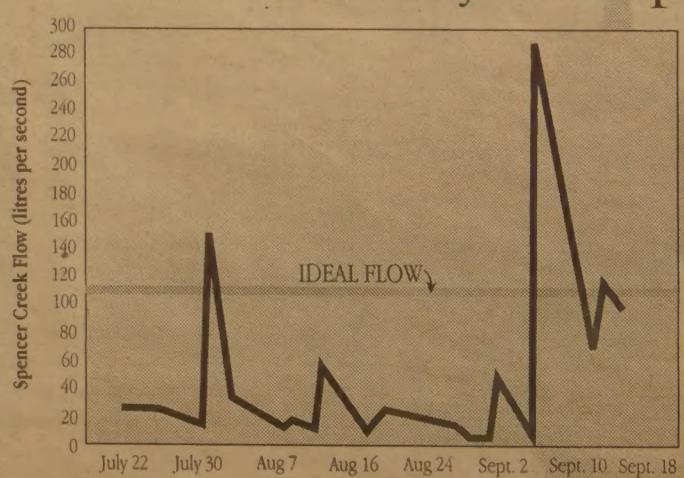
When performed in conjunction with stream rehabilitation and naturalizing projects on nearby public and private lands, the HRCA works toward another important goal: increasing the health of streams, the Hamilton Harbour and ultimately Lake Ontario.

Christie Reservoir Depth



This chart illustrates that Christie Reservoir never reached its normal summer level.

Flow from Beverly Swamp



One monitoring station recorded zero flow from Beverly Swamp just before the remnants of Hurricane Dennis passed through Hamilton-Wentworth over the Labour Day weekend.

The Twelve Nights of Christmas Festival and Passport New for '99

Take a magical evening journey across the region this holiday season with The Twelve Nights of Christmas Festival.

Hosted by four of Hamilton-Wentworth's most beautiful destinations, the festival offers a glorious showcase of color, lights, costumes and music. Hosting attractions are Westfield Heritage Village, Royal Botanical Gardens, Whitehern Museum and Battlefield House Museum.

Each destination captures the warmth and beauty of the holidays through unique Yuletide programs offered on separate nights, Wednesday through Saturday from Dec. 1 to Dec. 18.

Admission to the evening events is by passport only. One price gives you admission to all four sites. Passports are for sale at over 30 Shopper's Drug Mart stores throughout Hamilton-Wentworth. Passports prices are: Adults \$12; Youth \$7; and Children 5 and under free. Members and volunteers of the hosting destinations receive discounts on the passport.

**Wednesday, December 1, 8, & 15.
5 p.m. - 9 p.m.**

Whitehern Museum

Step back to an Edwardian Christmas celebration at Whitehern Museum, the stunning heritage home of the McQuesten family. Whitehern captures the warmth and splendour of a turn-of-the-century Christmas with its magical decorations and traditional trimmings which include a spectacular floor-to-ceiling tree. The Whitehern Christmas experience is completed by a visit to nearby churches where the sounds of organs and heralding of choirs warm the soul. Hosting churches include James Street Baptist on Dec. 1, MacNab Street Presbyterian on Dec. 8 and St. Paul's Presbyterian on Dec. 15. Seasonal refreshments will also be served at these sites which are located within one block of Whitehern.

**Thursday, December 2, 9 & 16.
5 p.m. - 9 p.m.**

Royal Botanical Gardens

Experience the beauty of our natural world when Royal Botanical Gardens Centre lights up for Christmas. The decorated gardens will feature children's crafts and carollers in a festive celebration of the holidays. To round out the evening, be sure to reserve a table for a fabulous dinner at the Gardens' Café.

**Friday, December 3, 10 & 17.
5 p.m. - 9 p.m.**

Battlefield House Museum

Cross the threshold of the 200-year-old Gage Homestead to experience the sights, smells and sound of an early 19th-century Christmas. Relive a holiday when tallow candles provided the only light and evergreen boughs bedecked the mantles. Kick up your heels to the fiddler's music, sip hot cider and be dazzled by the first-ever lighting of the Battlefield Monument.

**Saturday, December 4, 11 & 18.
5 p.m. - 9 p.m.**

Westfield Heritage Village

Spend an evening in the "Village where time stands still" as Westfield's townsfolk celebrate the Yuletide season. Over 30 historical buildings with costumed interpreters provide a stunning showcase of holiday traditions spanning the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian eras. Mingle amid the toy-makers and carollers where the air is rich with the smell of fresh-baked goods and seasonal music. The glow of lanterns and the sound of sleigh bells guide you through this celebration of food, music and charming family fun.



The Twelve Nights of Christmas Festival is the perfect way to celebrate centuries of Christmas tradition while looking with anticipation to the festive days ahead. Take this chance to find joy with the special people around you and make memories that will last a lifetime.

Passports goes on sale Nov. 1 at Shopper's Drug Mart stores. They are also available by calling any of the four attractions. For more information, call 1-888-319-HRCA.

Westfield Wonderful in Fall, Winter

History comes alive any Sunday and statutory holiday at Westfield – the Village where time stands still.

Westfield's stunning collection of more than 30 historical buildings makes it one of the most unique attractions of its kind in Ontario. Carefully restored and staffed by costumed interpreters, the buildings capture the true charm and spirit of

early Canadian culture.

Visitors may witness living history demonstrations and take part in guided tours of the 130-hectare site complete with beautiful woodlands and trails.

Enjoy "All you can eat Brunch" any Sunday (11 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.). And look to Westfield's gift shop for great ideas.

In addition to regular Sunday programming, Westfield holds the following special events: Fall Harvest & Halloween in

October; Christmas in the Country in December, and the Sweet Taste of Spring in March. For full event details, see the back page of this paper.

Regular programming time: Sundays and holidays, 12:30 p.m. - 4 p.m. Special event times may be different. Phone: 1-888-319-HRCA or (519) 621-8851. Westfield is located in Rockton on Regional Road 551, just off Highway 8 between Hamilton Cambridge.

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**ROYAL
BOTANICAL
GARDENS**



CHRISTIE AND VALENS each offer 10 kilometres of trails for winter biking and cross country skiing.

Outdoor winter options plentiful at Valens, Christie

Winter camping, cross-country skiing and fishing at local conservation makes it easy and fun to be outdoors this winter.

Valens offers an excellent camping experience in its pine and spruce forest. Sites are available for tenters and RV users as are hydro hook-ups, heated washrooms and showers.

Campers and day trippers can enjoy outdoor ice-skating and 10 kilometres of groomed trails, good for cross-country skiing and winter hiking. Ice fishing for monster northern pike and panfish is by far the most popular activity. Heated wood huts with room for up to four anglers are available to rent this year.

For more information or to reserve sites and huts, call (905) 525-2183 or (519) 521-6029.

Christie trails and Christmas trees

Christie Conservation on Highway 5 in Flamborough also offers 10 kilometres of trails. Cross-country skiing is

particularly popular when weather and trail conditions permit.

Another popular event at Christie happens in December when the best trees grown by Mother Nature go on sale.

"They truly are the most perfect Christmas trees I have ever seen," says Bill Fraser, Christie's superintendent.

A wide selection of freshly cut spruce and scotch pines will be available from the first week in December. While picking out a tree, enjoy hot apple cider with friends and family, compliments of Christie staff.

Proceeds from tree sales go the HRCA's conservation programs at Christie.

For more information about Christie, call (905) 628-3060 or on-line at: www.hamrca.on.ca

An automated gate system is in operation this winter at both Christie and Valens. Remember to bring coins: quarters, loonies and toonies. Admission is \$5 per vehicle.

Stewardship: expansion good news for environment

continued from page 1

increasingly taking steps to protect these areas themselves.

"Our greatest achievement has been the partnerships we've formed with private landowners. This has resulted in greater acceptance of the idea that people should take responsibility for their land and stream use since it impacts directly on water quality downstream - in creeks, harbours and Lake Ontario," says Rzaadki.

Some of the HHWSP's plans include conservation and restoration projects along Fifty Creek in the City of Stoney Creek. Stewardship activities are also planned for the Bronte Creek Watershed. They will be promoted there in conjunction with a watershed study which was initiated earlier this summer by Conservation Halton. Watershed studies identify an area's natural environmental features and

contain recommendations for their protection, restoration and enhancement. This is done with consideration for the social and economic needs of residents. Once studies have been completed, a stakeholder group will guide the writing of plans, recommendations and regeneration strategies for the watershed. This group will consist of residents, and representatives from industry and government.

If you would like to undertake a rehabilitation project, contact the HHWSP at (905) 525-2181 ext. 164 or 165. A range of expertise is available from a variety of sources including the Conservation Authorities. A small amount of money may also be available along with a pool of enthusiastic volunteers. In fact, one thousand students and watershed residents have participated in these projects since 1996.

The watershed stewardship program encourages voluntary protection of the streams, wetlands, forests and meadows in Hamilton-Wentworth and Halton regions by private landowners. It involves a verbal and voluntary commitment by landowners to protect natural features on their property. All participating landowners receive a sign in recognition of their commitment.

The program has been funded by: Ontario Heritage Foundation, Ray Lowes Fund, Hamilton Community Foundation, Environment Canada, Great Lakes 2000 Cleanup Fund, Human Resources and Development Canada, Canada Trust- Friends of the Environment, Hamilton Region Conservation Authority, Conservation Halton, Bay Area Restoration Council, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Richard Ivey Foundation, and Laidlaw Foundation.

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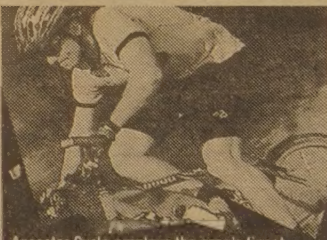
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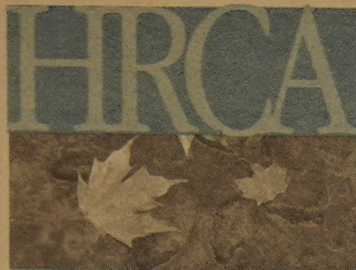
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Hamilton-Wentworth Trails Network



Get outdoors and explore the many great trails in Hamilton-Wentworth. These pathways provide important links to natural areas, valley lands, the Niagara Escarpment, Lake Ontario, and neighboring municipalities. They also offer some of the best opportunities for recreation and nature appreciation - key components in the campaign to secure a healthy, sustainable community for future generations.

MIDDLETOWN ROAD TRAIL

FLAMBOROUGH

This 19.5-kilometre trail will link the Dundas Valley, Christie Lake, the provincially significant Beverly Swamp and Valens Conservation Area. It will ultimately link to Cootes Paradise, Hamilton Harbour and the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trails via the Hamilton to Brantford Rail Trail.

Status: A funding application has been submitted to the Canada Millennium Partnership to cover a third of the project's cost. The HRCA and the Conservation Foundation of the Hamilton Region will work to raise the balance.

Total Cost: \$309,000.

LAKE ONTARIO WATERFRONT TRAIL

The Waterfront Trail stretches 325 kilometres along the shore of Lake Ontario. The trail links as many as 177 natural areas, 143 parks and promenades, 80 marinas and yacht clubs, hundreds of historic places, fairs, museums, art galleries and festivals. The goal is to link Niagara-on-the-Lake and Gananoque, connecting at each end with the Seaway Trail in New York State. The trail traverses Hamilton on road and pathway. The paved 3.5-kilometre paved promenade at Confederation Park is part of the trail. The City of Hamilton and its partners are working hard on their proposal to link the Harbour Front, Dundurn Park and Cootes Paradise to the trail.



POWERLINE ROAD TRAIL

STONEY CREEK

This 9.5-kilometre trail will link the 1812 Battlefield House Museum, Devil's Punch Bowl Conservation Area, Vinemount Wetlands and the Bruce Trail. It will eventually continue on road to link with the Waterfront Trail at the Fifty Point Conservation Area and Marina on Lake Ontario.

Status: A funding application has been submitted to Canada Millennium Partnership Program to cover one-third of the project's cost. The HRCA and the Conservation Foundation of the Hamilton Region will work to raise the balance of the required funding.

Total project cost: \$240,000. (estimate)

RED HILL VALLEY TRAIL

This seven-kilometre multiuse trail connects the Waterfront Trail in Confederation Park and the Bruce Trail. It is a short distance from both the Hamilton-Wentworth and Chippawa rail trails. All three trails are suitable for cycling. It passes through lovely escarpment lands and beautiful natural areas.



HAMILTON TO BRANTFORD RAIL TRAIL

The Grand River and Hamilton Region Conservation Authorities jointly own and operate this 32-kilometre multi-use trail which runs from Ewen Road in west Hamilton through the Dundas Valley Conservation Area to Brantford. It is Canada's first fully developed, multi-use interurban trail system. It's also a part of the Trans Canada Trail. Links to Paris and Cambridge extend the trail to 80 kilometres.



BRUCE TRAIL

This 782-kilometre continuous footpath follows the Niagara Escarpment through Southern Ontario, from Queenston Heights to Tobermory in the Bruce Peninsula. The portion through Hamilton-Wentworth is known as the Iroquoia section. It travels across public parkland, private land and HRCA conservation areas. The Bruce Trail is the oldest marked hiking trail in Canada.

Remember: the HRCA also operates several multi-use trail at its major conservation areas. Call 1-888-319-HRCA to learn more about the 40-kilometres of trails in the Dundas Valley and the 10-kilometres of trails at both Valens and Christie.



CHIPPAWA TRAIL

HAMILTON TO CALEDONIA

When completed, this 15-kilometre abandoned rail corridor linking Hamilton with Caledonia will become part of the Niagara branch of the Trans Canada Trail. It will also be connected to the Caledonia-to-Dunnville rail trail, ultimately linking to Fort Erie and along the Welland Feeder Canal trail.

Status: Four kilometres have been completed. Work is scheduled in three phases as funding permits. The Conservation Foundation is spearheading efforts to fund the rail corridor conversion. Individuals and groups may assist in the project by "symbolically" purchasing one-metre sections of trail for \$30.

Total project cost: \$735,000.



NEWS from The Conservation Lands of Ontario

THE
CONSERVATION
LANDS OF ONTARIO

Businesses looking for exciting programs and team building venues have several choices at The Conservation Lands of Ontario (TCLO).

The tourism marketing alliance of six area conservation authorities showcased its wide range of activities and facilities in a familiarization day attended by over 60 meeting and event planners earlier this year.

Held at Crawford Lake near Milton, the event included llama treks, biking with Steve Bauer, fly fishing and historical site tours. Planners were also introduced to the many facilities and services offered by TCLO's partners in the Hamilton, Halton, Toronto, Long Point, Niagara and the Grand River watersheds.

"An outdoors venue is the natural antidote to the pressures of the corporate world. Our conservation lands are perfect places to experience this," said Jim Reid, Project Manager of TCLO.

Those in attendance agreed. "Planners had nothing but praise and know first hand that they can count of The Conservation Lands to put on a flawless event," said Anne-Marie de Lavison, on behalf of the Independent Meeting Planners Association of Canada.

Great Canadian Adventures

Customized corporate events are part of TCLO's Great Canadian Adventures program.

The first event held at Kelso Lake last year treated Canada Life's top sales people from Ireland to a day of canoeing, cycling, climbing, horseback riding, dancing, fly fishing and great food.

For its success that day, the TCLO program has been nominated for the 1999 Crystal

Award - Best One Day Event in Canada by the Society of Incentive Travel Executives, in New York.

More recently, Nortel Networks and 180 of its staff experienced a Great Canadian Adventure at Kelso Conservation Area in July. The one-day event, scheduled as part of a week-long conference, offered a range of activities including mountain biking, archery, bocce ball and a gourmet dinner.

Great Canadian Adventures, tailored to meet any company's needs, can be hosted locally at Christie, Valens and Dundas Valley conservation areas. For more information, call 1-888-319-HRCA.

TCLO Spring Water

The Conservation Lands has its own brand of bottled spring water that's recording great sales success.

In the last year, over 70,000 bottles have been sold at local conservation areas and special events.

Vendors and purchasers alike appreciate the fact that a percentage of sales is donated to environmental projects.

The water is available to the public at all HRCA conservation areas.

Trail Guide Series

A big hit with hikers this past summer has been *Bruce Peninsula Trails* by author Kathryn Jacob.

The guide to trails in the Bruce Peninsula, Grey, Sauble, Saugeen and Maitland areas is part of a series written by Jacob. Other guide



Meeting planners get acquainted with llamas Applejack and Crackerjack at The Conservation Lands of Ontario's familiarization day. Participants were introduced to the sites, activities and programs available in southern Ontario for corporate events and teambuilding.

books include *Grand River Country Trails* and the best-selling *44 Country Country Trails*.

In total, 11,200 copies of the TCLO trail guides have been sold since May 1998.

Books can be purchased from the HRCA Outdoor Shop on page 12, at the Dundas Valley Trail Centre and selected book- and outdoor stores in Hamilton-Wentworth.

Canada's Competitive Advantage

TCLO is doing the right thing according to the Canadian Tourism Commission.

In its September report, the Commission said that travel businesses should be promoting Canada's greatest competitive advantage: its great outdoors and cultural diversity.

The Commission recommends several tourism-building strategies, many of which are practiced by TCLO.

They include promoting: Canada's outstanding scenery and wildlife, national parks and forests; exciting sports such as hiking, canoeing, kayaking, rafting, snowmobiling and dog sledding; the variety of cultural possibilities; and our good value-for-money destination.



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The Clear-3 Committee is a "Special Purpose Body" originally established in 1991 by the elected Council Members of the City of Stoney Creek.

The Committee is composed of eight volunteer resident citizens who are appointed by the existing Stoney Creek Council Members for a period of three years.

Clear-3's purpose is to act as an advisory committee on matters that effect our community's natural environment and corporate image, also to report on such matters as the illegal dumping of waste, excessive littering and the defacing of public property by vandalism.

The committee's main focus has been to promote our citizens to participate in the annual "pitch-in week" campaign. To this end we provide citizen groups agencies, private individuals, schools and others with the required materials and backup to complete their efforts to collect waste and recyclables that have been carelessly discarded on public property by others. To date the participating groups and individuals have collected more than 742 bags of garbage and 1974 bags of recyclable materials.

We also have a "litter control agreements" with the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth under their "Adopt-a-Road" program and twice a year clean up the litter on both sides of Highway No. 8 between Lake Avenue and Gray's Road.

We look forward to new ideas and comments for our citizens to help keep our City clean.

Adventures in the Valley

Ages 6 - 10 years

SATURDAY: Oct 16; Nov 13; Dec 19; Jan 15
Feb 12; March 25; April 15; May 13; June 17

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon Cost: \$15.00 per session

Location: Dundas Valley Conservation Area

Call Beth or Sandy to Register: (905) 627-3140

* See the back page of Event Listings for program themes

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Conservation Foundation: Gala Auction October 13

Environmental initiatives across Hamilton-Wentworth and in Puslinch will get a financial boost Oct. 13 when the Conservation Foundation of the Hamilton Region hosts its 1999 Gala Auction at Carmen's Banquet Centre.

Some of the auction items include a five-day guided fly-in canoe trip for four in Northern Ontario; a Mercedes-Benz of your choice for a weekend; golf equipment; autographed sports paraphernalia; Toronto Maple Leaf tickets (Gold Section); a Paluski Touring Kayak; a sunset airplane tour above the Niagara Escarpment with in-cabin refreshments; artwork by Frank Panabaker; services ranging from automobile maintenance to massages; and restaurant gift certificates, giftware and houseware.

In all, the evening will feature door prizes and hundreds of auction items with winning bids averaging 30 to 50 percent below retail values.

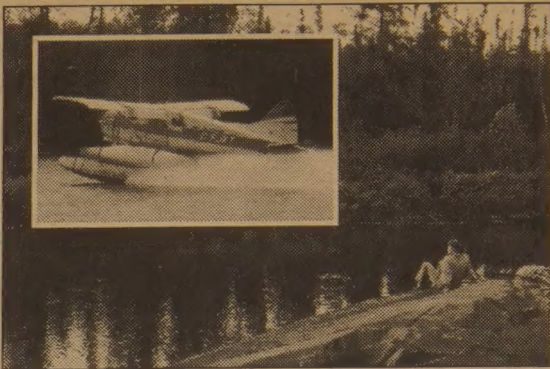
A \$25 ticket includes complimentary cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and desserts. Tables seating 10 people may be reserved for \$250. The evening starts at 6:30 p.m. with a

champagne reception hosted by Auction Chairman Russ Powers. Entertainment will be provided by the Silvertones Orchestra steel band.

The Conservation Foundation is a registered charity dedicated to raising money to assist in the acquisition, conservation and rehabilitation of environmentally sensitive lands within Hamilton Region. It has been instrumental in the preservation of significant habitats, and the development of historic sites, a memorial forest, two rail trails and wheel chair access facilities.

"We're offering a wide variety of items, worth more than \$50,000. It's a great opportunity to help the Conservation Authority preserve wetland and forest habitat, while picking up some real bargains for your holiday shopping," said Conservation Foundation President Stefan Spicer. "The success of this auction proves the people and businesses of this community strongly support conservation initiatives."

Carmen's Banquet Centre is located just off the Lincoln Alexander Parkway, east of Dartnall Road on Stone Church



AUCTION ITEM: guided fly-in canoe trip in Northern Ontario

Road. Champagne reception starts at 6:30 p.m. with silent and live auctions to follow.

Purchase your tickets by calling the Conservation Foundation at (905) 525-2181, ext. 168.

Campaigns Making a Difference

Land Acquisition

One of the highest priorities for the Conservation Foundation is raising funds for the acquisition of natural areas.

The Niagara Escarpment and significant wetlands across Hamilton-Wentworth and in

Puslinch are among those areas we are seeking to protect.

Learn more about our acquisition campaigns by contacting us at the phone, e-mail and web addresses listed below.

Fifty Point

Wheelchair access to the tranquil fishing pond at Fifty Point Conservation Area will be possible from next summer now that the Conservation Foundation has successfully raised \$20,000.

The pond, stocked with bass and trout

through the spring and summer, is a popular spot for both families and experienced anglers.

Fifty Point now joins Christie Conservation Area on the HRCA's list of popular fishing spots with wheelchair access.

Dundas Valley

A campaign is underway to build a full-scale representation of a tree within the Dundas Valley Trail Centre.

Known as The Enchanted Tree, it will become a focal point for children and adults visiting the valley by offering a fun, interactive approach to studying our local environment.

The two-level structure will come complete with viewing ports and telescopes that peer into the Dundas Valley. Educational panels, puzzles, and other hands-on activities will further help introduce visitors to the area's natural environment.

This and other informative and interactive displays in the centre are designed to help

visitors learn about the valley, and its flora and fauna, before venturing out on its trails. To date, the campaign has raised one-third of the project's cost. It has been generously supported by the Hamilton Community Foundation.

The Enchanted Tree will complement several new exhibits and informative displays that were secured through a \$24,000 fund-raising campaign in 1999. These include a trail etiquette display, two trail maps for kiosks in parking lots, a "Welcome to the Dundas Valley" display map listing trail conditions, and a Dundas Valley cultural heritage display

Valens

The pine shoot beetle wreaking havoc on the forests at Valens Conservation Area will not be having the last word.

The Conservation Foundation is leading a campaign to replace trees lost to the beetle which resists all known means of control.

Adventure Attic, an outdoor shop in Hamilton's Westdale area, and many of its customers have generously donated to the project, as have Valens patrons. This campaign, known as the Valens Green Fund, is ongoing.

Nominate high school students now!

YOUTH AWARD for Environmental Leadership

The search is on for the next generation of Hamilton-Wentworth environmental leaders.

The Conservation Foundation and the Hamilton Region are looking for a local secondary school student and one student group who have shown leadership in addressing environmental problems or in educating others on environmental issues.

The winning student and student group of the 2000 Youth Award for Environmental Leadership will each receive \$500, a plaque recognizing their environmental achievements, and a plaque to display in school. The winners

will be honoured at the annual Environmentalist of the Year Award dinner in June.

The Youth Award for Environmental Leadership recognizes students and student groups in Hamilton-Wentworth secondary schools who have demonstrated environmental leadership skills in their school, community or local watershed. They must be committed to action-oriented projects which address environmental problems and have the ability to work co-operatively with others.

Nomination forms are available by calling the HRCA at (905) 525-2181, ext. 146, or by e-mail: mwood@hamrca.on.ca

Nominations must be postmarked by April 30/2000.



Become a Conservation Foundation member

The Conservation Foundation of the Hamilton Region is a registered charity dedicated to the preservation and appreciation of the natural lands and cultural heritage of the Hamilton Region.

By becoming a member of the foundation, you're making an investment in projects that make a lasting difference in our community and our world.

To learn more about becoming a member, contact us:

By mail:
Conservation Foundation of the Hamilton Region.
P.O. Box 7099, 838 Mineral Springs Road
Ancaster, ON L9G 3L3

Phone: (905) 525-2181 ext. 168

Fax: (905) 648-4622

E-mail: conservation@interlynx.net

Web site: <http://conservation.interlynx.net>

Fall Excellent for birdwatching

Simple feeder can extend viewing time and help birds meet winter's challenges

October is the perfect time of year to witness flocks of migrating birds riding northern tail winds south over the escarpment.

Robins, blackbirds, house finches, grosbeaks and crows - all are late fall migrants and they populate the sky along with hawks throughout this month.

Looking for food and shelter on the way south, many of these birds make evening stopovers in the Dundas Valley and other HRCA conservation area. There they search among the fallen leaves for seeds and insects before resting up for the next day's flight.

Look close and you'll see that these birds are fat - and that's a good thing. They need the energy stored in that fat to fly long distances as they migrate. The food they glean from the forest floor or open meadows of our conservation areas adds fuel for flight. Fat also helps keep them warm as the nights get longer and days colder.

Usually, birds finish migrating before the short, cold days of winter have settled in. In this way, they do not have to eat to keep warm and migrate at the same time.

For wintering bird species, the coming months are always a challenge. They must rely on a limited and diminishing food supply.

Conservation areas often have plenty of berry bushes, old fields with weed seeds still held above the snow and trees with hibernating insects snuggled under the bark or in tiny holes. These are well-stocked larders for many small birds. The old fields with



Winter feeders attract Chickadees, like the one seen at left, and Nuthatches.

their meadow voles (the little brown field mice that create tunnels and pathways on the ground) are good habitat for hawks and owls.

You can help birds get through the winter in good health by providing simple, easy to make feeders in your backyard. Most of the wintering species will come to feeders to eat seeds or fat. Steady feeding throughout the entire winter is necessary. Birds will come to rely on your feeder and if you stop putting food out, they may perish.

We recommend an above ground feeder carrying a mix of white millet, cracked corn, sunflower seeds and peanuts pieces or hearts. These are the seeds most frequently eaten. Milo, wheat, oats and other seeds are much less popular. A separate

feeder stocked with black sunflower seeds and another with black niger seed will attract many more birds. These single item feeders are best as silos with short perches and small holes that finches and chickadees can use while larger birds cannot.

In addition to seed, birds will look for sources of fat. Suet, lard and fat trimmings from meat are excellent sources of energy for woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches and many others. Providing fat sources is easy - simply smear fat into two-inch holes drilled into a block of wood, then hang it from a tree limb. This feeder may also attract night-time raccoons so you may wish to bring it inside at night or somehow hang it from a perch that they cannot reach.

Squirrels also will get into the seed and fat. Today, there are feeders designed to keep squirrels at bay. You may want to try one or just enjoy the squirrels.

Make sure you keep the feeders clean, especially when the weather turns warm. Salmonella bacteria can grow quickly in damp, mouldy seed. Birds are particularly susceptible to Salmonella poisoning. A good scrub with a ten per cent bleach solution will clean all feeders well.

Feed until warm weather arrives. The birds will diminish as spring arrives, leaving you to find other foods - newly emerging insects, buds of trees, sap and fresh greenery. When you see few birds, take your feeders down, clean them and store till next winter.

"Your" birds will appreciate your thoughtfulness and generosity. In fact, they might not survive without.

Volunteers help HRCA improve fish habitats, Dundas Valley trail

HRCA staff together with volunteers from the Hamilton Area Fly Fishers and Tyres are helping make the area's best brook trout fishery a whole lot better.

Much of their work over the last two summers has involved clearing debris and exposing gravel beds

on a section of Fletcher Creek just south of Regional Road 97 in Flamborough.

Cedar boughs, wired in bundles, have also been placed along the creek banks. Known as cedar sweepers, the bundles trap silt and help narrow the creek channel.

The current and final step of creating instream cover will be completed next summer.

Narrow channels, exposed gravel beds free of logs, and instream cover improve spawning and feeding habitats for brook trout.

In another extraordinary show of volunteerism, a group of hikers and cyclists joined the Conservation Authority earlier this year in upgrading trail surfaces in the Dundas Valley.

"Their commitment was the driving force behind improvements to the Hilltop Trail," says Scott Konkle, director of planning and engineering at the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority. "Not only was project cost cut in half, but they also helped secure substantial private sector funding to cover the materials. Without this support, it would have been impossible to proceed."

The Hilltop Trail project will improve areas that become particularly muddy after rainfall. The bulk of work involved burying a drainage system of stones and fabric casing near problem-areas of trail. This will restrict moisture in nearby slopes from saturating the trail surface. The system, designed by HRCA staff, should result in drier trails which are easier to maintain and less susceptible to damage.

"Volunteer support like this demonstrates that many users will go the extra mile to keep the trails in good condition," says Konkle. "That support is excellent."

Molson's Breweries and Canada Trust's Friends of the Environment Foundation supported the trail improvement through generous donations. These grants were secured by mountain biker Ed Zacharewski and the Conservation Foundation of the Hamilton Region.

The International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) sent two American experts to assist in the work. Jan and Mike Riter, both of Georgia, participated as part of a North American tour to assist in trail design and maintenance efforts.

The Dundas Valley is a 1,200-hectare natural area owned and managed by the HRCA. The conservation area boasts a 40-kilometre trail system open to hikers, cyclists and equestrians. The 32-kilometre Hamilton-to-Brantford Rail Trail may also be accessed here.

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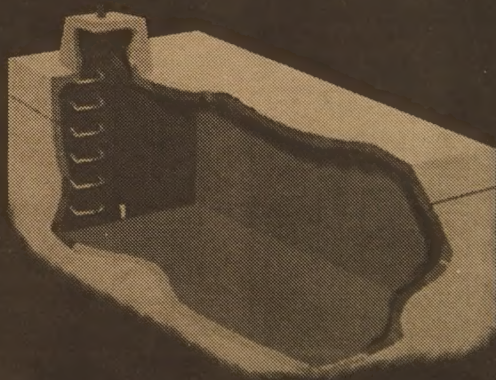
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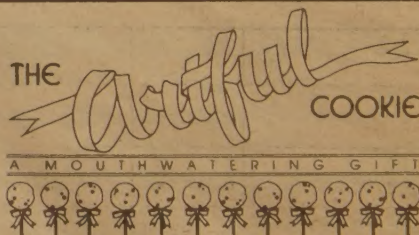
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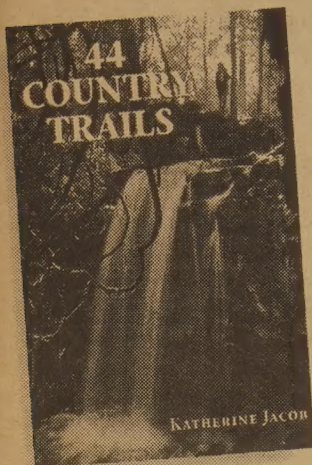


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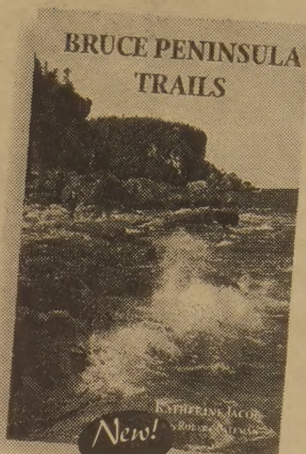
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44 Country Trails

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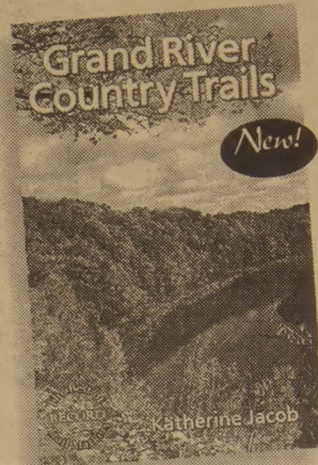
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Bruce Peninsula Trails

A great guide to trails of the Bruce Peninsula, Grey Sauble, Maitland Valley and Saugeen Valley Conservation Authorities.

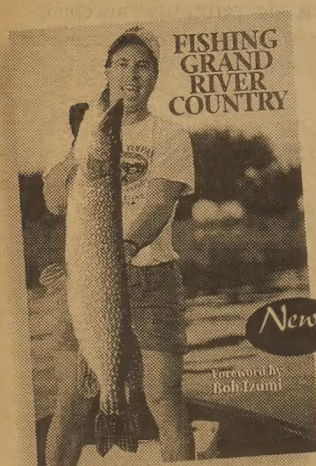
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Dundas Valley Map

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Get year-round access to HRCOA conservation area. The Annual Vehicle Pass allows driver and passenger admission. Passholders receive a host of benefits including admission to some special events. Call for details.

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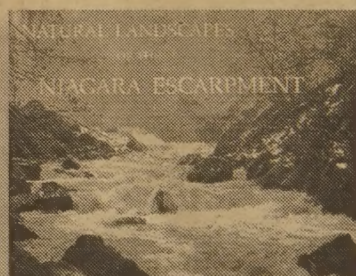
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Fall/Winter Event Listings

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October Harvest Celebration

Westfield Heritage Village celebrates the fall harvest with special programming on Sundays and holidays in October. Horse-drawn wagon rides and guided tours available. Historical buildings will be decorated for the season with pumpkins and corn stalks. Call (519) 621-8851.

Oct. 16. Adventures in the Valley: Birds of Prey

We'll investigate what makes hawks and owls so different from other birds then head outside with binoculars to search them out. Time: 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. For children ages 6 to 10. Cost \$15 per child. Call (905) 627-3140 to register.

Oct. 17. Wellness Walk

Join Beth Stormont and John LaRose in this first of a series of Wellness Walks in the Dundas Valley Conservation Area. The walks highlight the Valley's many trails and are a great opportunity for exercise. Cost: \$5 per person plus admission to the park. Time: 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Call (905) 627-1233 to register.

Oct. 23-24 Valens Pumpkinfest

Free pumpkins this weekend with every admission to Valens Conservation Area, including campers. Call (905) 525-2183 or (519) 621-6029 for more information.

Oct. 29. Hallowe'en at Westfield

Bone up on your history and folklore! Return to the origins of Halloween and experience an evening like no other. Time: 6:30 p.m. - 9 p.m. at Westfield Heritage Village. Admission applies. Call (519) 621-8851.

Nov. 13. Adventures in the Valley: Survival of the Fittest

How does nature prepare for winter? We'll look for ways that creatures and plants, big and small survive the season!! For children ages 6 to 10. Cost \$15 per child. Time: 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. Call (905) 627-3140 to register.

Nov. 14. Wellness Walk

Join Beth Stormont for a Wellness Walk of the Monarch Trail. This trail winds through a series of mature deciduous forests, meadows and rolling hills with panoramic views of the valley. Time: 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Cost: \$5 per person plus admission to the park. Call (905) 627-1233 to register.

Dec. 1 - 18. The Twelve Nights of Christmas Festival

Take a magical evening journey across the region this holiday season with the new Twelve Nights of Christmas Passport. Witness a Yuletide celebration of colour, lights and music. Participating partners include Westfield Heritage Village, the Royal Botanical Gardens, Battlefield House Museum and Whitehern Museum. For passport information, call: 1-888-319-HRCA.

Dec. 4-5, 11-12, 18-19. Christmas in the Country.

Travel through time and witness the evolution of Yuletide traditions spanning the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian eras. Over thirty historical buildings are decorated in the traditions unique to these periods. Mingle amid the toy-makers, carollers and sleighs where the festive air is rich with the smell of fresh-baked foods and seasonal music. Time: Saturdays and Sundays, 12 p.m. - 4 p.m. For information, call (519) 621-8851 or 1-888-319-HRCA.

Dec. 19. Adventures in the Valley: Christmas for the Animals

Help wildlife and birds this holiday season by learning how to set up an observation and feeding station in your own backyard!! For children ages 6 to 10. Cost \$15 per child. Time: 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. Call (905) 627-3140 to register.

Dec. 20. Wellness Walk

Enjoy a walk along the Sawmill Trail. The trail winds through the rolling hills of the Dundas Valley, through mature deciduous forests and open meadows. Time: 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Call (905) 627-1233 to register. Cost: \$5 per person plus admission to the park.

January Ice Fishing

Ice fishing season begins at Valens, conditions permitting. Fish for monster northern pike and panfish. Ice hut rentals available. Admission: \$5 per vehicle, including driver and passengers. Call (905) 525-2183 or (519) 621-6029 for more information.

Jan. 15. Adventures in the Valley: Winter Birds

There are over 160 species of birds in the Dundas Valley. Come and discover which ones are smart enough to survive the winter. For children ages 6 to 10. Time: 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. Cost \$15 per child. Call (905) 627-3140 to register.

Jan. 30. Get Tracking!

Join naturalist Beth Stormont to track down clues to the whereabouts of the Dundas Valley's winter residents. Discover how to interpret the signs other animals leave behind. Time: 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Cost \$25 per family, or \$10/adult, \$5/child. Call to pre-register (905) 627-1233.

Feb. 4 & 11 Owl Prowl

Whoop goes there? Come, and join us for an evening exploring the wilds of the Dundas Valley in search of its resident owls. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight. Time: 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. Cost \$25 per family, \$10/adult, \$5/child. Call to pre-register (905) 627-1233.

Feb. 12 Miss Muffin Gets Married

Help Miss Muffin and her soldier-husband celebrate their nuptials as a guest at their wedding reception. Feast on wedding fare from the 1812 war-era while you dance and sing the evening away. At Westfield Heritage Village. By reservation only - book early! Call (519) 621-8851.

Feb. 12. Adventures in the Valley: Animal Tracking

We will explore the wilds of the Dundas Valley in search of clues to the wildlife that make the forests and fields their home. For children ages 6 to 10. Time: 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. Cost \$15 per child. Call (905) 627-3140 to register.

Feb. 13. Snowshoe Clinic

Take a guided trek on the snowy trails of the Dundas Valley. Morning: 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Afternoon: 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. Cost \$25 per family, \$10/adult, \$5/child. Call to pre-register (905) 627-1233.

March 5, 12, 15, 16, 19, 26. April 2 Sweet Taste of Spring

Witness maple syrup demonstrations of native, pioneer and modern methods at Westfield Heritage Village. Also available, pancakes and sausage smothered in maple syrup. Time: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Call: (519) 621-8851.

March 25 Tap into Spring

Learn how to tap a maple tree and turn sap into syrup!! For children ages 6 to 10. Time: 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. Cost \$15 per child. Call (905) 627-3140 to register.

April 15 A Wildlife Adventure

Rabbits and coyotes and owls, oh my!! Discover who lives in the Dundas Valley and how they manage to survive!! For children ages 6 to 10. Time: 9:30 - 12 p.m. Cost \$15 per child. Call (905) 627-3140 to register.

April 16 Pitch-in Day

Pitch in and help give the Dundas Valley a spring tune-up. We'll be getting down and dirty so dress appropriately. Rain or shine. Time: 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Meet at the Trail Centre.

April 16 Wellness Walk

The Main Loop Trail is a great introduction to the Dundas Valley. It winds through hemlock groves on the way to historic Sulphur Springs and the Hermitage Ruins. Time: 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Call (905) 627-1233 to register. Cost: \$5 per person plus admission to the park.

April 21 Good Friday Llama Trek

Enjoy a Good Friday walk through the Dundas Valley with Garth Gourlay of Wyldewood Farms Llama Treks and his gentle llamas. Cost \$5 per person. Session Times: 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. & 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Call to pre-register (905) 627-1233.



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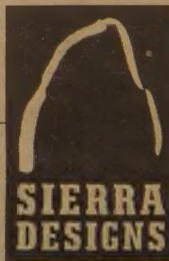


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